

# Strategies to Projects: Building a Common Understanding 2003 LE/SRFB Workshop

## **Breakout #1**

*The following thematic descriptions resulted from an analysis of the breakout #1 worksheets. Below each theme are 2-3 examples of representative comments from the worksheets.*

### **1. New information learned from presentations**

- **Overall Process**

The workshop provided participants with a better understanding of the overall LE/SRFB process and how the pieces connect – Limiting Factor Analyses lead to strategies lead to projects. Participants gained insight into the complexities of the process, the differing stages of LE development, the numerous and diverse stakeholder interests involved, the evolution of the funding cycles, including the role available funds play in decision-making.

- **Strategies**

Participants increased their understanding of how integral LE strategies are to the process, how heavily they are relied upon in the review of projects, what they should cover and in what detail.

- Strategies are expected to set goals and outline long term vision.
- Projects are expected to line up with strategy, to show a clear connection. This is not always the case.
- Some LEs have sophisticated ranking criteria for community aspects. Community values can be difficult to define because there is no standard definition.
- LEs with weaker strategies actually have weaker projects due to the correlation/reflection.
- LEs don't have power to implement strategy - this is basic issue that was highlighted.

- **State Technical Panel**

Workshop information regarding the role of the TP was new to many participants. Participants were unaware that the Technical Panel uses criteria to evaluate LE strategies, looks to some extent at community values and socio-economic issues through evaluation of strategies, defers to the highest rating when it cannot reach consensus, and particularly that the TP evaluates LEs and the quality of LE processes.

### **2. Additions/Changes to Workshop Information**

- Participants identified a few additional pieces of information to fill out the descriptions of the various roles in the process presented by the panelists. The suggestions all related to the role of the TP and the project selection process included:
  - Make explicit that SRFB is operating under funding constraints.
  - Clarify that the TP and SRFB staff interact with and provide guidance to local LE.
  - Specify how much political considerations influence staff and board decisions, including cases where high benefit projects in one watershed are not funded while lower benefit projects in another watershed are.
  - Acknowledge that disconnects exist between local professional opinion and state technical opinion.

### 3. Key Comments, Recommendations and Questions

Participant comments and questions fell into several key areas:

- Overall process (including relationship to regional and ESA-level salmon recovery)
- Lead Entities and LE strategies
- The role and inner-workings of the TP
- Agency staff and technical assistance
- The role of citizen committees (TAG's)
- Funding

#### ▪ Overall Process

Comments revealed both an appreciation for the consistent timeline and good momentum of the process and a desire for more efficiency. Comments included the following recommendations:

- *Plan ahead and provide schedule and clear guidance at beginning of funding cycle*
- *Don't change rules during process.*
- *Shorten the time between submittal and decisions*
- *Allow more time for LEs to review draft TP ratings*
- *Allow un-funded projects to come back in future cycles*
- *Consider whether the SRFB is best for this job*
- *Send the TP evaluation back to Citizen Committee for ranking*

The question of how the LE process fits into regional and ESA recovery came up repeatedly. Comments revealed an eagerness to have this answer in order to plan and prioritize efforts accordingly.

- *How will LE strategies link/coordinate with regional recovery planning?*
- *How is this decided? And by whom?*
- *What is each LE's role in overall salmon recovery from a state perspective and priority-wise?*
- *What will happen in the future if a LE strategy diverges from the regional recovery plan for that area? Will that affect SRFB's view of the strategy and the projects?*

#### ▪ Lead Entities

Participants noted that LE technical review of projects is generally working well and that LEs are successfully staging projects for other funding sources.

Participants expressed the desire for:

- *More LE involvement after projects are funded.*
- *The ability for LEs to appeal a rating decision by the TP*
- *Clarification of LE role in terms of the legislation*
- *A certification process whereby LEs could be certified based on specific success criteria to receive block grant funding*
- *Clarification of the distinction between the LE and LE coordinator*

#### ▪ State Technical Panel

The role and inner workings of the State Technical Panel evoked the greatest amount of questions and concern from participants. Although some participants were pleased with the TP's interaction with LEs and encouraged by its increased availability, many comments revealed a concern that the TP is not intimate with the LE strategies or projects. Participants repeatedly expressed a desire for TP visits to project sites, increased involvement/integration with LEs, strategy revisions, and local decision-making before, during and after project review and rating.

- Participants expressed the following opinions about the TP roles:
  - *The TP should be comprised of local TAG members.*
  - *Some TP members may not have appropriate expertise to judge projects.*
  - *TP membership be consistent from year to year; should be a dedicated/standing SRFB TP (even if smaller)*
  - *Two member Technical Panel teams were effective*
  - *Is TP worth the expense?*
  - *TP should have clearer, non-duplicative roles*
- Participants were interested in the operations of the TP and SRFB evaluation process:
  - *What criteria does the TP use to evaluate LEs and strategies?*
    - *Technical merit only?*
    - *Community values?*
  - *Who is determining cost-benefit of projects?*
    - *How does that link to "certainty" rating?*
  - *Is the TP reviewing with respect to local, regional or statewide views?*
  - *What is the importance or effect of "last minute" sales pitch to SRFB when making decisions on funding?*
  - *Who decides what the funding priorities will be each cycle?*
  - *Are there plans to expand the role of the state TP in coming rounds? Technical advice?*
  - *What is the role of the IAC SRFB staff in the selection process?*
  - *TP interview questions address topics not covered in application*
  - *TP should provide detailed feedback to LEs following initial funding recommendation.*
  - *Find way to make views of TAG and Citizens panel transparent to SRFB/TP, especially when there is significant discrepancy*
  - *Clarity on monitoring aspects/requirements*
  - *Cost/benefit analysis - how to do it*

## ▪ **Strategies**

LE strategies were another big topic of comments and questions. Participants wanted to know

- *How to communicate strategies to the SFRB/TP, particularly more holistic aspects*
- *How to reconcile in strategies the technical objectives with what is socially and economically possible (e.g. estuary projects may be highest priority technically but not feasible in short term because of landowner issues.) How does SRFB view/evaluate this?*
- *Whose role is it to evaluate strategies, particularly social/economic components?*
- *How the overturning of the BiOp affects their roles, strategies and the process itself.*
- *Who should develop strategy "abstract" in order to develop concise summary of strategies?*
- *SRFB TP/IAC should be a bigger part of strategy development*

They asked for

- *More explicit strategy descriptions and guidance but allow for creativity*
- *Clarity on how projects should fit technical strategy versus overall strategy*

## ▪ **Agency Staff – access to and provision of technical assistance**

Participants were pleased with IAC staff accessibility and communication with LEs, but also expressed a desire for IAC staff to work more to assist LEs to prioritize projects in line with

strategies and even to adopt an LE advocacy role. Participants were also pleased with WDFW staff technical assistance. WDFW Stewards were requested to increase their work with the TP and there was a recommendation to look at the state Conservation Commission model of staff hands on task management on a watershed by watershed basis

#### ▪ **Citizen Groups**

Comments reflected the opinion that local support of and involvement in the process energizes communities around salmon recovery. The following comments/questions pertain to the purpose and content of the citizens committees

- *A more thorough description of citizens committees should be provided.*
- *How representative are the citizens groups of the actual citizenry?*
- *What does a citizen group do about individuals with vested interests in the watershed?*

#### ▪ **Funding**

Participants identified the following desired changes regarding funding:

- *Reveal SRFB funding approach – how funding will be crafted within limits of the funding – up front rather than at the end of the funding round.*
- *Stick to funding amount that was specified at the outset.*
- *Distribute total available funds*
- *Provide more funding predictability*
- *Fund projects on timberlands*
- *Define "money well spent"*
- *Better define SRFB's funding strategy/priorities (e.g. Is the focus on ESA or on spreading the money evenly to encourage all LEs?)*

Participants asked the following questions about funding

- *What changed in our 4th Round grant process and if we have limited funding next year will we follow the same approach?*
- *What protocol does the SRFB use to finalize funding decisions (e.g. May 2 meeting)?*
- *Should we have an appeals process to SRFB after funding decision?*
- *Should/can LEs weed out SRFB eligible projects? Different LEs have a different attitude/approach on this.*